



Pathways, from GCSE to HE

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What is HE?

Higher education (HE) is studied after college or sixth form and offers a wide range of courses and qualifications available at a variety of different places. You can study HE at a university, college, the workplace, other training provider, or even online through distance learning.

In addition to the variety of places you can study, there are also different types of courses and qualifications to choose from. Courses available at HE include: degrees, higher national diplomas and certificates, foundation degrees, higher and degree apprenticeships and professional courses. The type of course you choose will depend on the subject you want to study, where you want to study and the grades you achieve at GCSE level and at college or sixth form.

Higher education can be split into undergraduate (before graduating) and postgraduate (after graduating). From school or college, you would usually start with undergraduate studies.

What could it mean for me?

It's never too early to start thinking about your next steps after school and college. This guide will give you some hints and tips on the steps to take over the next few years to ensure you can work towards your goals. Higher education is not for everyone, but it's important to make sure you've considered all the options before you make your decision.

There are a number of reasons people decide to study at HE, including;

- It can give you an opportunity to study something you care about and are interested in at a deeper level
- You will develop skills in a number of areas that will help you in the future and within employment
- It's a great opportunity to meet new people and make friends with similar interests

There are also benefits for your career:

- People who have studied a degree (graduates) earn on average **£10,000** a year more than those without a degree*
- Many careers will ask for a degree or equivalent – it doesn't always matter what subject you studied, but they recognise that a degree gives you valuable skills
- You must have a specific degree to enter some professions, such as being a nurse, teacher, psychologist or solicitor.

Source: www.gov.uk/government/news/graduates-continue-to-benefit-with-higher-earnings

Your pathway to HE

Level 2 GCSEs, BTEC first, Intermediate Apprenticeship, Cambridge National/Technical

Level 3 A Levels, BTEC National Certificate or Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeship, Cambridge Technical, UAL Diploma, T Levels, Access to HE

Level 4 (undergraduate) First year of degree/foundation degree/HND, Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher Apprenticeship

Level 5 (undergraduate) Second year of degree, Foundation degree. Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher Apprenticeship

Level 6 (undergraduate) Degree, Degree apprenticeship

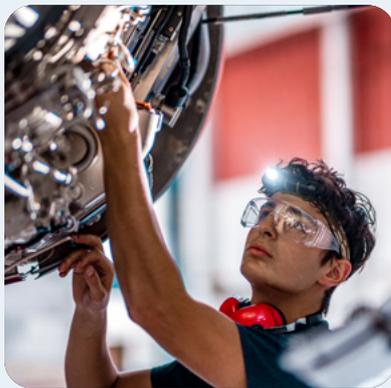
Level 7+ (postgraduate) Masters, PGCE, PHD

Next Steps – selecting your study options

There are no right or wrong study options, but it does help to think about what you want to do in the future, so you can steer your subject and qualification choices to your chosen career. These individuals' journeys show examples of how this might be useful but there are a lot of different pathways that can get you to the same career.

Case Studies

Paulina wanted to work in healthcare so chose additional science for GCSE to give her the best opportunity to get a good science grade. Her school also offered a Health and Social Care BTEC alongside GCSEs so she took that option as she thought it would be interesting and she would enjoy it. At sixth form Paulina studied A levels in Biology, Psychology and Art and then went to university to study Midwifery.



Vishal wanted to go into engineering so took triple science at GCSE as well as subjects he thought he would enjoy and do well in. He chose to study a BTEC in Engineering at College, which he didn't do as well in as he hoped so he studied an Engineering foundation year at university before starting his degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Sam wasn't sure what they wanted to do so chose GCSE subjects that they would enjoy and do well in. After GCSEs they studied an apprenticeship in accountancy with a local business and they continued to support them through their higher education accountancy qualifications which they studied for whilst working.



Many people are not sure what they want to do for a career, if this is the case for you then the best thing to do is to pick a range of options. It may be useful to consider:

- **Which subjects you enjoy? Generally, we perform better at subjects we enjoy.**
- **Which subjects are you good at?**
- **How you prefer to be assessed, through coursework or exams?**
- **If you want to keep your options open when you have finished school?**

Don't worry if you change your mind or decide on a career once you've already chosen what to study, the most important thing is to work hard and get the best grades that you can. This is the best way to make sure you have a range of options open to you.

When selecting your study options

Try to

Ask teachers and tutors for advice about courses, they know you and they know which courses might suit you best.

Attend open days/evening or events about choosing your options to learn about what is available and ask questions.

Try your best in all subjects, achieving your best puts you in a great position for progressing to the next step.

Select subjects you will enjoy and work hard in.

Try not to

Choose a subject or course because you like the teacher, teachers and roles can change and you can't be guaranteed the teacher you expect.

Study something purely because your parents want you to. This does not always mean it is the best option for you.

Pick a subject or course because you have heard it's easy. Everyone is different and finds different things easy or more difficult.

Select a course or subject because your friends may be in the same class. We all have different interests, strengths, and areas for development. It's important that you consider yours first and you may not end up in the same class anyway.

What's next? After GCSEs

Whilst studying for your GCSEs you will need to start thinking about what you would like to study at the next step (level 3). It can feel overwhelming when faced with the different options available to you. Making this decision whilst preparing to sit GCSEs can seem like a daunting task. The below table includes information about the different options available to you and answers some of the key questions you will need to know before making your decision.

You will need to satisfy different entry requirements for each of these options and your local college or sixth form will be able to give you more information on these. Most Level 3 courses require you to have achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or above including English and maths. They will be different for each college/sixth form and for each subject so please check with the sixth form or college you would like to study at.

Your options at level 3

A Levels

What are they? A subject based qualification, students usually study 3 of these at the same time.

How would I study? These are classroom based qualifications that you will study in classes, lectures, tutorials and/or workshops. You will be expected to complete work and extra research independently outside of lessons.

Where would I study? A further education college or sixth form.

How will I be assessed? A levels are usually assessed through examinations although some subjects also have practical assessments, performances and/or coursework.

Useful links

Careerpilot – <https://bit.ly/40Hg38K>

Which? University – www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHKFrXMCHII&t=119s

Informed choices – www.informedchoices.ac.uk

BTEC/ Cambridge Technicals (VTQs)

What are they? A qualification that combines practical learning with theory. You usually focus on one subject in your studies with over 2000 to choose from.

How would I study? You will spend your time in classes and workshops learning about your subject area. You will be expected to study independently and may have the opportunity to gain work experience.

Where would I study? These types of courses are more likely to be studied in Further Education colleges but are offered in some sixth forms.

How will I be assessed? These courses are mainly assessed through coursework and you might have a mixture of assessments including essays, reports, performances, presentations, group work, practical assessments and written tests.

Useful links

Pearson – www.btecworks.com/student/quiz

OCR – <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/332245-cambridge-technicals-explained-summary-brochure.pdf>

T Levels

What are they? Career focused qualification that combines practical work, theory and work experience. You choose one and study it for two years.

How would I study? You will study in a practical way by simulating what happens in the workplace. You will spend 80% of your time in the classroom and 20% on placement.

Where would I study? T levels are more likely to be studied in Further Education colleges but are offered in some sixth forms.

How will I be assessed?

Assessments for T levels may vary depending on the subject studied but will involve exams and employer based projects/ coursework.

Useful links

Government T levels information –

www.tlevels.gov.uk

Search for T Levels near you –

<https://bit.ly/3YEhiUT>

Apprenticeships

What are they? Combines working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job.

How would I study? You will spend 80% of your time in the workplace learning whilst working and 20% of your time studying.

Where would I study? You will spend most of your time working and learning on the job so will be based at the site of your employer. Your study time will usually be at a college or could be at a university, training centre or your place of employment.

How will I be assessed? You will be assessed on the job as part of your training as well as by assessors at the college you are studying through. Your assessments could include observations of you in the workplace and written or practical assessments.

Useful links

Benefits of studying an apprenticeship can be found on – <https://bit.ly/3zFujU9>
Search and apply for an apprenticeship using the – <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

All of these options are accepted for entry to study a higher education (degree level) course at university or college. If you are thinking of progressing to higher education, it is important to have a look at the courses you are considering studying as the entry requirements will be different for each university and each course.

This also may help you to select the right level 3 qualification for you. You can research higher education Courses and their entry requirements using **UCAS** which is a great resource and has easy to use search and filtering functions.





What else can I do?

It's important to make the most of opportunities that may be available to you while you're at school. There could be ways to build your skills and gain new experiences while having fun and making new friends. This could help you to stand out from your peers when applying to university and jobs in the future.

Additional qualifications

Some sixth forms and colleges offer additional qualifications that you can study alongside your course. Examples of these are the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), Core Maths and Financial Studies. Completing extra qualifications like this can help you to develop essential skills in different areas and shows universities and future employers that you are able to manage a heavy workload well.

Work experience/work shadowing

Work experience gives you a great understanding of different careers that you can consider once you leave school. It also helps you to build your skills for when you apply for part-time jobs in the future. Work experience is usually unpaid but gaining employment whilst you are studying is also a great way to develop your skills and be paid for your time.

Volunteering

This is a great way of gaining experience, building skills, and supporting your local community. Many councils and charities offer volunteering schemes, or you can contact specific places (care homes, arts and culture organisations, community groups) to see what they have available.

Sports and Clubs

Sports and clubs can help you to manage commitments outside of school and give you valuable opportunities to work as part of a team, step up into leadership roles and work under pressure.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (The D of E)

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a great way to have fun, make friends, improve your self-esteem, and build confidence. The award is available at three different levels and is nationally recognised when applying for university courses.



Study local, go far!

You can study anywhere in the world but if you prefer to stay nearer to home or have other commitments in the local areas there are plenty of options to study in the **East Midlands**, some of which are listed below.

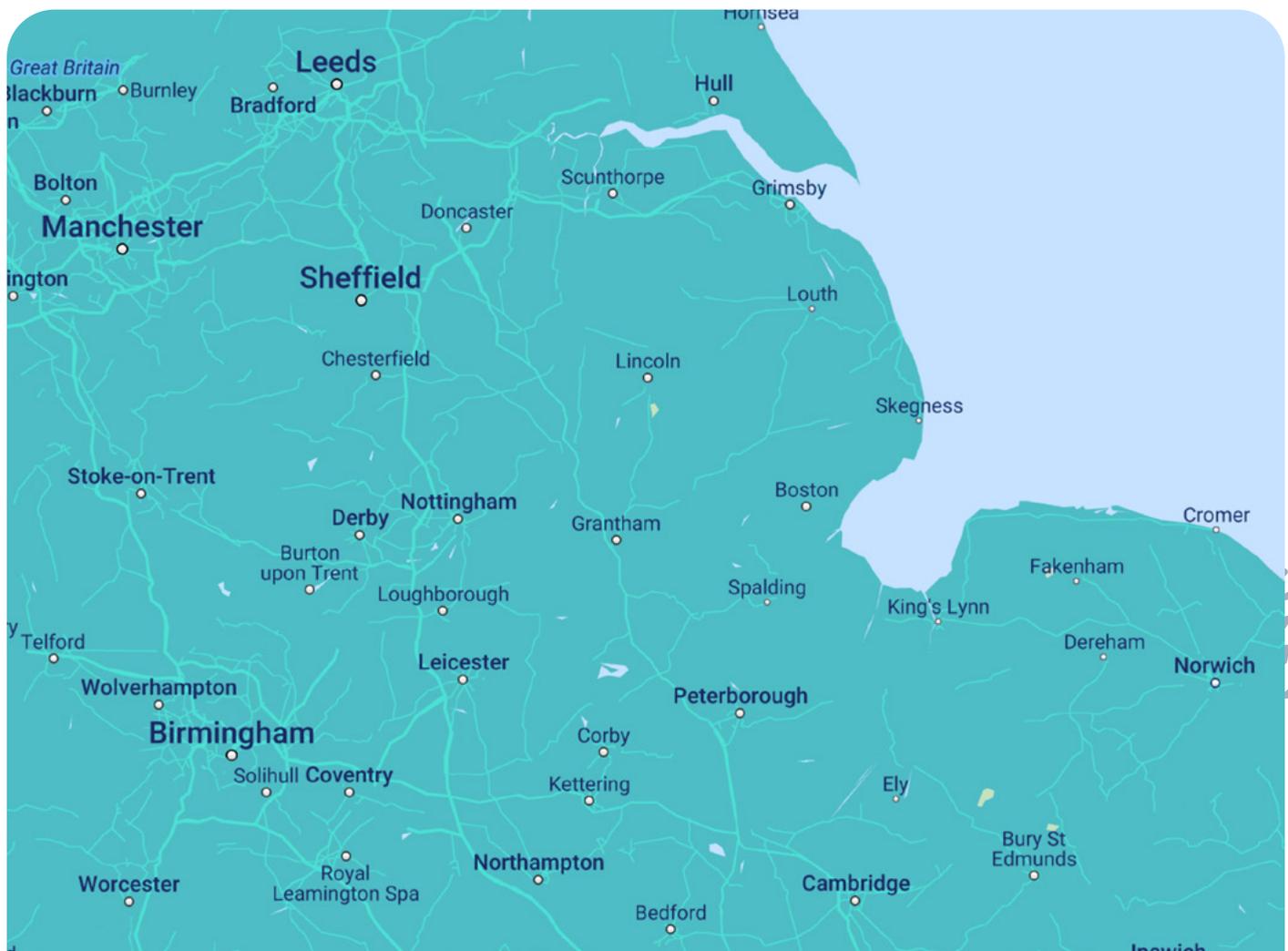
Colleges

you can study higher education at a number of colleges as well as Further Education (level 3)

- Bilborough Sixth Form College
- Buxton and Leek College
- Chesterfield College
- Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies
- Derby College Group
- Loughborough College
- Newark College
- Nottingham College
- Vision West Nottinghamshire College

Universities

- Bishop Grosseteste university
- De Montfort University
- Loughborough University
- Nottingham Trent University
- Sheffield Hallam University
- University of Derby
- University of Leicester
- University of Lincoln
- University of Nottingham
- University of Sheffield



Next steps



1. Make an appointment with the career's advisor at your school or college to have a chat about your options and ambitions.



2. Go to industry events held by your school, college or other local colleges or universities. You will be able to speak to employers about what they would expect from you if you wanted to work in their company.



3. Visit websites that can give you support in your decision-making process:

National Careers Service - www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Prospects - www.prospects.ac.uk

Amazing apprenticeships - www.amazingapprenticeships.com

UCAS - www.ucas.com



4. Attend open days and events at colleges and universities to get an idea of what you might want to do after school and/or college. Ask about facilities, teaching style, expectations and what subjects are offered to find out what might be the best option for you in the future.



5. Remember, it's okay if you don't know what you want to do at this stage. It's still a good idea to start thinking about your interests and ambitions so you have the best chance of making an informed decision.

DANCOP Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Partnership

A partnership of universities and colleges from across the two counties, working together to support young people to consider their futures. We aim to inspire and inform learners about their options and provide targeted outreach activities. We work with learners, teachers, advisors, parents, and carers, to break down the barriers that might prevent young people from progressing to higher education.

